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Policy Analysis in Brazil

By Jeni Vaitsman; José Mendes Ribero and Lenaura Lobato (eds)

Bristol: Policy Press, 2013, pp 286. ISBN 978-1-4473-0684-9; £58.99 (hbk)

This edited book represents a comprehensive compendium of the state of the art of Brazilian Policy Analysis. According to the editors, the book's prime objective is to systematise the field of policy analysis in Brazil, something missing in the literature, necessary to the development and of the sub-discipline and, not least, to better the mechanisms of decision-making, design, evaluation and implementation of public policies. The book offers twenty short articles divided in four parts in addition to one introduction and no wrap-up conclusion.

The first part is dedicated to 'styles and methods of policy analysis'. Vaitsman, Lobato and Andrade make a historical account of policy analysis in Brazil and rightly relate the evolution and professionalisation of the sub-discipline with the formation of the modern Brazilian state. Two moments in history were key for this purpose, i.e. 1930 and the creation of the modern bureaucracy under military rule and the reforms of 1990s which 'set in motion' some important Constitutional Reforms in the context of the posttransition (p.14). The military centralised administrative functions consolidating the state control over a country of continental proportions but it also consolidated the elite control of the state because it prevented the integration of new stakeholders. The latter was only possible in the context of the second key moment for policy analysis in Brazil, undertaken in the 1990s, which resulted for the authors in a process of horizontalisation of decision-making. The Federal government retained, however, strategic prerogatives such as the capacity to recruit state bureaucracy through the creation of the Public Service Administrative Department (DASP) in 1936 and the School of Public Administration in 1989. According to Celina Souza, this decision has contributed to the incremental modernisation of the Brazilian state over the years.

Unlike most Latin American countries which declare federalism in paper and enforce centralism in practice, municipalities and sub-national states in Brazil are fully-fledged federative entities. The relationship between the three institutional level of government and policy analysis is the object of study of the second part of the book, including executive government and legislature. For Farah the municipal level became critical for the policy process because it represented the mobilisation of knowledge from the local to the federal level. However, the author reduces the participation of the civil society in the policy process only to the generation of 'feedback'. For Santos, the opening of institutional spaces like the advisory structure of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies was important to create communication between the civil and the political society. The study of Velazco and Pinheiro reveals the functional role played by the mighty Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) in inducing large scale privatisation (first, bailing out public companies in financial difficulties, later taking administrative control of them, and finally selling them to the private sector). Their assessment of the privatisation in Brazil, however, is more contentious as they propose that it was something pursued not for ideological reasons, but rather as an instrument of economic policy intended to solve macroeconomic problems. The disassociation between policy and politics provides a fictional sense of neutrality to a political process which actually shifted the relation of power in Brazil in favour of transnational financial capital, and to the 'free market' governance against any sort of state regulation.

In the third part of the book, Cortes narrates the positive correlation between political liberalisation and the expansion of social spending, that raised from 0.08 to 1.08% of GDP between 1995 and 2009. The relation between the mass media and political parties deserves the attention of Lattman-Weltman who study the recent attempts by the Workers' Party to regulate it. The authors rightly argue that the media with privileges, which successfully blocked the PT's reform initiative, hold veto powers in contemporary Brazil which in turn increases the transaction costs of new public policies. The current oligopoly dominating mass-media businesses represents a democratic deficit

that needs to change. The interaction between policy design and interest groups is further studied in the article by Fonseca and Bastos who observe that civil society participation was critical in shaping public policy towards HIV. Brazil pioneered the integration of prevention and treatment, which included the public production of medication, as an integral public policy.

The forth and final section provides a critical review of academic and research institute-based policy analysis. Rosário Costa studies the sanitary reform which is one of the most puzzling sectoral reforms in Brazilian recent history. While the whole region was 'turning right' and public policies were changing from a universalistic model towards targeted, means-tested state interventions, Brazil wrote a new democratic Constitution which also created the Unified Health System. Its creation led to the adoption of the universal right to health for the first time. This historical paradox is explained, according to the author, because of the cunning role played by the *Sanitaristas*, an expert community who, by minimizing their original anti-capitalist intellectual production, successfully seized the opportunity opened by the transition, colonised a niche of the state apparatus, and forced the expansion of citizenship by including the SUS in the new Brazilian Constitution.

Written by Brazilian scholars working in the country's most prestigious higher education institutions, the book fills a gap in the specialised literature published in English about policy analysis in Brazil. Students, scholars and policy makers will find in this book a wealth of information, analysis and sources; all critical material to study the field of public policy in contemporary Brazil.

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